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DE RUEHNR #1573 1001437  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 101437Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0889  
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8396  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 4602  
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 4103  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1296  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1926  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1900  
RUEANHA/FAA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS NAIROBI 001573

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: KENYAN MILITARY AIRCRAFT CRASHES IN MARSABIT

¶1. (SBU) A Kenyan military Y-12 aircraft crashed and caught on fire in Marsabit town (Eastern Province, north-central Kenya) at approximately 10:00 a.m., April 10 due to poor weather conditions and ground obstruction near the airfield. According to Defense Minister Njenga Karume, the plane was carrying 17 people from Nairobi whom he described as "government officials and leaders." Other sources indicated some of those aboard were Assistant Minister Titus Ngoyoni, Eastern Province Provincial Commissioner Patrick Osare, Assistant Minister for Internal Security Mirugi Kariuki, Marsabit District Commissioner Kingola, and three area MPs, including deputy leader of the parliamentary opposition, Bonaya Godana (North Horr). While the government has not publicly given casualty figures, an official told Emboff there were four survivors, one of whom died enroute to the hospital.

¶2. (SBU) Embassy responded immediately with a condolence statement and a private offer of assistance to the Kenyan Department of Defense and the Chief of the National Disaster Operations Center. President Kibaki publicly stated that a rescue and evacuation mission was underway for which the government had sent two aircraft. Marsabit, bordering Ethiopia, has recently experienced an upsurge in the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Borana and the Gabra tribes. The officials on board the aircraft were traveling to the region on a domestic peace and reconciliation mission. The area is also suffering from the severe drought affecting the north and northeast Kenya.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: There has been no/no suggestion of foul play or terrorism in this crash. The tragedy, involving so many heavy-hitters (two assistant ministers and one of only eight Provincial Commissioners), will likely send the political elite into shock mode. The Y-12 is a Chinese-made two-engine small transport aircraft. Kenya procured six in 1997 and six in 2000, only seven of which were operable at the time of the Marsabit crash -- a result of insufficient upkeep. Emboff traveled on one of the Y-12s in early April; the aircraft lost a part in-flight, but continued the journey safely. We do not yet have a clear picture of which passengers died in the crash. END COMMENT.  
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